



**Forest Health Advisory Committee
September 20, 2019
10:00 AM to 1:00 PM**

For information about the Forest Health Advisory Committee including meeting agendas and materials please visit this link: <https://www.dnr.wa.gov/ForestHealthAdvisoryCmte>

Present: Erika Stone- DNR, Cody Desautel- Colville Tribes, Paul Dahmer- WDFW, Darcy Batura- TNC, Cynthia Wilkerson- WDFW, Joanna Eide- DNR, Debbie Hollen- USFS, Tom Bugert- DNR, Stevie Mathieu- DNR, Jen Watkins- DNR, Elaine Oneil- WWFA, Matt Comisky- AFRC, Richard Tveten- WDFW, Jim Soffer- WSSDA, Tyson Bersone-Riggs- WA, Mark Doumit – WFPA, Chris Conklin- WDFW, Amy Ramsey- DNR, Ashley Blazina- DNR, Kevin Arenson- BC, Julie Sackett- DNR, Chuck Turley- DNR, Andy Tate- DNR, Mike Anderson-TWS

Forest Health and Resilience Division Updates (Julie Sackett)

There are a number of new hires in Forest Health and Resilience Division including Jen Watkins, Michael Norris, and Andrew Spaeth. There are two new forest and wildfire scientist positions that will be starting this fall.

Forest Stewardship has moved to Forest Health and Resilience Division to help foster stronger alignment across program work and landowners in priority watersheds.

The team has completed landscape evaluations for 12 of the 33 priority planning areas identified in the 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan. Collectively the 33 planning areas encompass 2.65 million acres of land. All 33 landscape evaluations will be completed by December 2020.

Forest Health Tracker is currently being developed. The purpose of this tool is to be able to track forest health treatments across all forestlands in the state. There is not currently a one-stop-shop for this data. It will help us establish a clear baseline and track progress implementing the 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan.

The 19-21 biennial budget included funding for 30 full-time firefighters that will become part of the agencies cross-trained workforce. The agency is working on the position descriptions. In addition to their suppression duties the new firefighters will support and implement Forest Health work such as prescribed fire, community risk assessment, education and outreach.

Legislative Updates (Tom Bugert and Joanne Eide)

There are a handful of funding requests that are being considered for the upcoming short session:

- Requests associated with implementing fuel breaks and silvicultural burning as identified in 1784 and 5279.
- Additional capacity to support small landowner assistance. Washington State has more than 250,000 small private landowners and there are only two staff at DNR dedicated to supporting and providing technical assistance to those landowners.
- Urban Forestry is also likely to have a request, possibly tied to a renewal of the Evergreen Communities Act.
- There is also a non-agency request associated with 5996.

Tom and Joanne will be seeking input on these requests as well as funding and legislative requests for the next biennium. This will include follow up on identifying dedicated funding for forest health. Anticipate a deeper dive and follow up conversation at the December Forest Health Advisory Committee meeting.

Forest Action Plan Update (Andrew Spaeth)

In 2008 the Farm Bill established a requirement that each state develop a Forest Action Plan. All states and US territories completed these in 2010. A revised and updated Forest Action Plan was released by Washington DNR in 2017. The next plan update is required to be submitted to USDA Forest Service by June 2020.

The Forest Action Plan update requires an assessment of all 22 million acres of forestland in the state, an identification of threats facing forests, and strategies and actions to address those threats. Stakeholder engagement is a critical part of the process and DNR wants the Forest Health Advisory Committee to be engaged in the process.

Completing the Forest Action Plan is necessary for the state to continue to be eligible for USDA State and Private Forestry Program dollars. In 2018, this program provided more than \$12 million dollars, funding critical programs like Forest Stewardship, Urban and Community Forestry, and Forest Legacy, among others. In addition to remaining eligible, DNR is also interested in using the Forest Action Plan update process as a way to begin to identify priorities for Western Washington in a way that compliments the 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan for Eastern Washington. This should help us advance the Shared Stewardship Strategy and begin to understand stakeholder interest in a west-side strategy.

There is a survey available to gather input from members of the public about forests in the state. Please complete the survey and share it with your members and partners.

Prescribed Fire Update (Mike Norris)

Mike has been busy getting his feet underneath him in his new role at the DNR. He comes to the agency from The Nature Conservancy in North Carolina.

He is currently working on developing prescribed fire policies including burn policies, safety policies and contingency plans. He is also working to develop agreements, specifically a Master Agreement with USDA Forest Service, local and regional agreements, and landowner agreements.

There is a prescribed fire training opportunity coming up soon, called TREX, in partnership with Washington Prescribed Fire Council. This will help fire fighters and practitioners achieve necessary progress in their professional development and gain on the ground experience.

There are two hires that are anticipated for the prescribed fire program at DNR. The first hire will be a fire ecologist position and the second hire is a training specialist. It is also anticipated that the new 30 full time firefighters and engine bosses will be a big part of the workforce behind this program.

Shared Stewardship Agreement (Jen Watkins)

Shared Stewardship is guiding our work in Washington as we partner with USDA Forest Service, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, DNR State Lands, and forest health collaborative, among others. In Eastern Washington we have identified 33 priority watersheds that will be the focus of our work for the next few years. In Western Washington there are some priority landscapes identified in Central Puget Sound. The Forest Action Plan will serve as an opportunity to determine what the best approach is to advancing more strategic forest health treatments in Western Washington might look like. The purpose of the conversation today is to check in on the Shared Stewardship Strategy, to make sure we are all on the same page, and to understand how the Forest Health Advisory Committee would like to be engaged moving forward.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife staff shared that they are interested in engaging to advance the big picture goals and objectives, and better understanding how their staff can provide expertise that will be relevant in advancing the shared stewardship strategy.

There was interest expressed in ensuring that the agreement helps foster agency culture that is conducive to working across boundaries, with partners, and in an accelerated fashion. Ensuring there is a focus on implementation will be important to the success of the strategy.

The Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition will be hosting a meeting in Montana with staff from the USDA Forest Service Washington Office. The purpose of the meeting is for partners to share feedback with the Forest Service about the shared stewardship strategies in western states. George and Jen plan to attend and will represent Washington DNR. If you would like more information please follow up with Tyson Bertone-Riggs.

2019-2021 Forest Health Monitoring Priorities (Derek Churchill)

There is a list of monitoring projects available as a handout. This was shared over email prior to the meeting.

A few highlights include:

- Economic tool that will support landscape evaluations in each planning area. The tool incorporates information about topography, road systems and access, log prices, and treatment types and costs. This will help produce volume and cost estimates that can inform the economic viability of different treatments. The tool is being tested on a few planning areas and additional input will be used to inform further refinement of the tool.
- Updating the restoration needs assessment with more recent data and publishing the results. This was formative work done by Ryan Haugo and Tom Demeo, among others, focused on identifying active and passive restoration needs across the state.

- Effects of fuels treatments on snowpack accumulation. This will build on and expand current research being conducted by University of Washington.

In addition to the projects identified on the overview document the Forest Health Advisory Monitoring Sub-Committee will work with DNR scientists to develop an overview of monitoring efforts associated with the 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan. The document will describe the various levels of monitoring (e.g. high-, mid-, and local) and the role of DNR and partners at each level. The Monitoring Sub-Committee will meet again prior to the December FHAC meeting.

Alternative Plan Process (Amy Ramsey)

Alternate Plans were brought up at a previous Forest Health Advisory Committee meeting as an area of interest. Since then, DNR staff have worked to develop a brief overview of the process (see accompanying PowerPoint) and potential next steps to address concerns raised by FHAC members. The overview document was shared over email prior to the meeting. The purpose of the conversation today is to share an update with the full FHAC and determine what next steps, if any, the group would like to pursue.

Members of the FHAC expressed interest in learning more about the Alternate Plan process, costs associated with the process, and the level of need that exists in the state. One of the primary interests is to conduct fuels treatments in riparian areas that are overstocked and may act as “wicks” in the event of a future wildfire.

A small group of FHAC members expressed interest in meeting again to discuss next steps. Richard T, Mark D, Elaine O, Chris C, and Amy R volunteered to participate in a follow up discussion.

Round Table Updates (All)

Stevie M mentioned the Communications and Outreach Sub-Committee that was previously established. There is a core group interested in getting together to advance this work. Darcy B volunteered to join this committee. Andrew will follow up and help schedule time for this group to meet.

Cynthia Wilkerson shared an overview of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife legislative request. This would address some budget shortfalls and help maintain existing capacity at DFW. There will be time set aside on the next FHAC meeting agenda to discuss this in more detail.

The Tapash Sustainable Forest Health Collaborative is advancing a number of changes, including hosting public meetings to gather input on forest health projects in priority watersheds. The next public meeting will be held on November 12 at the Teanaway Grange. Contact Darcy Batura at The Nature Conservancy to learn more.

There are two forest health collaborative grant program opportunities coming up. The first is focused on forest health treatments and is due on October 23. The second funding opportunity is a capacity grant that helps support effective facilitation and coordination of forest health collaborative in the state.

The meeting ended at 1:04 PM.